

"CHURCHANITY."

A Paper Read Before the
Preachers' Meeting

AT BETHEL A. M. E. CHURCH

Monday Morning, November 16th,
1896, by Rev. J. T. Jenifer, D. D.

In the fast young age in which we are living, so rapidly are new schemes devised and new inventions brought out that, looking in the older editions of our lexicons you fail to find their names, so you are obliged at times to invent a name. Hence failing to find my subject in a Lexicon of the day I have invented one—Churchanity—the good and the bad.

I have called it churchanity because primarily it is church to deal with erroneous temporal elements than with spiritual administrations.

With a few exceptions the outlook of African Methodism in some sections of our country is not as prosperous, nor as promising as it used to be.

There is a decline in spiritual life and interest for soul-saving in the churches—a falling off in the numbers of conversions and in the accessions of members. The Methodist class meetings are wanting in power and the weekly prayer meetings have been abandoned in many of the churches. And nearly everything we own appears to be burdened with debt.

This spiritual decline is seen in localities, but its aggregate results are discoverable and felt throughout the connection as a whole.

I THE PREMATURE CAUSE.

To a large extent, I think, this declension may be traced, chiefly, to two causes: First, to the changed condition of our people, industrially and socially. Second, to the compromising temper and tendencies of the churches that have changed front and economic practices because of these social changes. This subject may therefore be considered as to its local phases, and in its general connection bearing.

Emancipation of the slaves in the South three open to the A. M. E. church, in a most propitious epoch of its history, possibilities, the extent of which she found herself without adequate means to fully embrace.

She was sadly in need of money and a sufficient number of efficient men. She was without the quality and quantity of church buildings, Sunday school appliances and educational facilities.

In this new and vast field the A. M. E. church found herself in competition with other organizations, abundant in resources, ripe in experience, efficient in management, and herself practically empty handed.

But in the spirit and love of Christ that deepens convictions of duty, with a firm trust in God, relying upon self and friendly aid, she went resolutely to this new field preaching the gospel to the poor.

Her empathfulness found here partial compensations in numbers of people who came flocking to her because of the kindred sympathies of race identity and their longings for religious freedom.

She found here thousands of ready respondents whose cravings were for spiritual liberty, wider fields for Christian usefulness, and broader development.

When found among a people with keen relish for things divine, spiritual-minded and of simplicity of heart, these ambitions and impulses are powerful backings to any good cause. They fire the heart and set the pocketbook to the cause of Christ.

Chiefly to these is to be attributed the marvelous advance and development of African Methodism the past three decades.

But conditions have changed and things are changing with them. As higher civilization comes among a people its vices as well as its virtues come with it. It brings its secularizing influences as well as inspiring and refining tendencies.

Social and business relationship increase, responsibilities are more numerous; wants multiply; time is more largely drawn upon for other things than religion, so that temptations to subordinate religious matters to other interests become increasingly strong.

Unless there is a proportionate increase of resources or revenue to sustain the multiplied wants that a higher cultivation and refinement bring with them, some interest will be made to suffer, and religion in the majority of cases is made the sufferer.

Our people are now largely in this stage of advancement. They are advancing in taste and refinement, so as to feel needs and have desires in common with more prosperous people, but, like the woman, who, when a widow and poor, and living in a cabin had each year \$5.00 to give the cause of Christian mission, but when married again, rich and living in

a mansion had only fifty cents to give on being asked by the circuit preacher why it was, said, "when I was poor I had a five dollar heart, but now being rich, I have only a fifty cent heart."

Our people are not monopolizing the positions of lucrative industry to the extent of former years, nor are they opening or entering new ones to an extent to compensate for those closing against them.

This changed condition in our domestic and social life is exerting its influence upon our church life and upon our Christian character. Our taste and our pride lead us to desire things as good and as fine as other people's. Hence these tendencies to over-reach the bounds of the people's ability in buying, building or repairing churches.

Pride stimulates us to compete with the more wealthy and we are led into it contrary to the disciplinary admonition to let our meeting houses be plain.

Still another cause, is that class of impracticable preachers who are lacking in the needed or not. Lacking check or judgment, they pull down, sell or remodel the old church, which is out of debt, else buy or build one at a cost far beyond the congregation's power to pay. Then follows the financial and the moral and evil effects.

The current expenses are made more burdensome, connectal claims are stunted and an immense mortgage debt, bearing heavy annual interest is incurred.

The people, in many cases, are taxed beyond their resources, the poor are embarrassed for lack of means to give, hence, remain away from services.

The edge and flavor of the sermons are destroyed by the tedious method of collecting while time to the attendants becomes irksome.

In this way the spiritual fervor of the church is cooled, the appetite for divine things loses its relish, the heart grows weary under these influences, and the motive for giving becomes weaker.

But the financial necessities must be met all the same, and how shall we meet them?

We must find expedients to meet the emergencies. The Shishak kings of Egypt have taken away the shields of gold from the army of the Lord prepared by the Solomons, so we poor Behebeims must provide brazier shields in the stead of King's shields.

27. Hence, to meet these demands, the churches are compelled to substitute for the higher motives for giving, self-interest and Christian benevolence the so-called innocent amusements, usually the parents of "go harm sin."

With these needs come such as the roulette wheel, and prize games, dances and donkey-tail parties "for the Church." Liquor tables with soft-drinks and dime museum dramas.

These images of the gaming and of the drinking saloon are carried on in the sanctuaries of the Lord, and these sacred (?) theatricals are performed upon His sacred altar.

It has become such the custom, of the times that the world looks for and expects the churches to supply its chief secular amusements, and the artists and the professionals expect the churches to furnish them employment, hall room, and the most of the money in payment for their services, after the manner of the pastors against the influence of the theatres, the barrooms and gambling halls is weakened.

The class-and-prayer meeting, the feeding pasture for the serious minded people, the refreshing pools for the care-worn and weary are supplanted, and finally shorn of their interest and power.

Hence the furnace fires of all the ecclesiastical machinery are put out.

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The class-and-prayer meeting, the feeding pasture for the serious minded people, the refreshing pools for the care-worn and weary are supplanted, and finally shorn of their interest and power.

1. Apply more business methods to money and religion.

Keep as much as possible within the bounds of the resources of the charge, make an estimate of the monthly expenses, including interest, then adopt a financial system and train the people to a plan of systematic giving. For example—suppose a church has 600 members enrolled, 200 may be deducted for aged, poor, children and the shirkers, 400 would be left.

100 can pay perhaps \$1.00 per month. 100 can pay perhaps 50c per month. 100 can pay perhaps 25c per month. 100 can pay perhaps 15c per month.

12 times \$100—\$2,250 per year. The running expenses amounting to \$150 per month, would be \$1,800, leaving \$450 to go toward interest or main debt.

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been gathering materials and wealth for three decades.

These were times when they symbolized Jehovah's wealth by the cattle upon a thousand hills.

Today such a symbol would be without significance. Gold, silver, iron, coal, oil, copper mines, mills, factories, syndicates, trades, banks, commerce and productive labor with good wages would be a more suitable and suggestive symbol of the exhaustless wealth of God in pouring into the lap of the people of today.

The Lord our King only asks a reasonable tariff of the people for his kingdom.

But some may be ready to reply that this is the transient and constructive period of our people's advancement; that many expedients are necessary to present emergencies.

The answer is, that this is the stronger reason that we, the leaders and teachers, should begin now to construct a right, morally, religiously, financially and on a solid basis.

Lay our foundations for the future growth and strength upon "Stone, gold and silver." That is, do as God did the Hebrew people—lay the foundation upon the Ten Commandments, and systematic benevolence.

I believe that the millions of dollars that the people of New England are consecrating annually to the sacred cause of Christian missions is due primarily to sentiments inculcated into them by their large-hearted leaders and teachers during the constructive period of their national life.

Under our present methods the ministry of the word is made to serve tables.

His heart and mind are over-burdened, he becomes secularized, has little or no time, in many cases, to apply his mind to studies, hence, the pulpit in too many instances falls below and fails to meet the demands of the pew.

The time has arrived also when the question should be seriously considered among us who need such fine churches and costly services if it would not be wise to purchase more parsonages and save rents, and to purchase real estate, start some church stores so that we could have our own sources than by simply begging.

I many of our present plans and practices may be needful and good, but the question remains, "may there not be better ones?"

If I have tried to call to mind some of the existing evils so that seeing them we may seek to find a practical remedy.

JOHN T. JENIFER.

TO THE WOMAN'S MITE MISSIONARY SOCIETIES

Of the Third Episcopal District, and to the North Ohio Conference Branch Especially.

DEAR SISTERS: Nearly seven months have passed since our convention in Dayton, Ohio, the first of July, and no word has reached us since we reached here. I write this in reply to the many communications which I have received concerning the minutes of the convention. I know nothing whatever of them. I have written—concerning the minutes of the convention, I am thus I do not know. I was not one of the publication committee, as many of you think. We would have profited much should we have received the minutes shortly after the convention. I am sorry that it has happened this way and trust that none of you will blame me.

Now, to the members of the North Ohio Conference Branch: Dear sisters, let us renew our vigor in this work and do our very best. Whether we excel or fall behind other Conferences, it matters not, if we have done our best.

We are delighted to know that the pastors are doing more for the cause. The presiding elders are assisting us wonderfully, and we hope for better reports all along the line. Do not become disheartened, but do as you have promised in your reports from time to time, more than you have ever done for the cause.

Take some missionary periodical—nothing better than the "Voice of Missions"—thoroughly acquaint yourself with the work.

Let your societies become more enthusiastic by learning more of the work.

Bishop Lee has already under consideration time and place for the meeting of the executive board, which I hope will plan carefully and well for the future success of our work.

Perhaps the next issue of the Voice or Missions will contain proceedings of the meeting.

For the benefit of many enquirers I furnish the names of the officers of the W. M. M. S. of the North Ohio conference branch.

Mrs. Lucy A. Collins, president, 2910 Park avenue, Walnut Hill, Cincinnati, O.

Mrs. Rosa Johnson, vice president, 44 Frank street, Cleveland.

Miss Hannah Johnson, recording secretary, 1016 N. Broadway, Piqua.

Mrs. Virginia Chaffin, treasurer, 88 Laurel street, Cleveland.

Mrs. Sada J. Anderson, corresponding secretary, 500 Erie street, Cleveland.

Miss Jessie Henderson, Mechanicsburg, lecturer.

EXECUTIVE BOARD.

Mrs. Collins, Johnson, Chaffin, Anderson, Miss Hannah Johnson, Mrs. C. D. White, Piqua, and Mrs. Hattie Price, Dayton.

Hoping, dear sisters, that you will make strenuous efforts to make the third quarter's work excel the second. I am yours for the cause.

SADA J. ANDERSON.

Cor. Sec. N. O. Conf. Branch.

A Christmas Story.

The Birth of the Savior Her-
alded by Angelic Choristers"For Unto You is Born This Day
in the City of David a Savior, Which
is Christ the Lord."Oh, to have dwelt in Bethlehem
When the stars of the Lord shone bright!
To have sheltered the holy wanderers
On that blessed Christmas night!
To have kissed the tender, way-worn feet
Of the mother undelivered,
And, with reverent wonder and delight,
To have tended the Holy Child!
What must have been the hurry and
bustle of the little town of Bethlehem
nearly two thousand years ago! It was
registration day and the people from
the surrounding country had come in
to the city to register their names.
No blue coats were needed to
maintain the order on the streets as it
was usually the custom on registration
days of this period. The multitude of
people were orderly and intent on at-
tending to their duty. The people
weary of the day's journey and about
the quiet little town had taken up
every available place of abode for
the night's rest. As the night
shadows thickened fast, foot-ways and
ways came two persons to seek shelter
and rest in a stable, having failed
to gain admittance elsewhere. They
did not seem in any way at all differ-
ent from others who had passed and
placed where the cattle were stalled,
but they were holy wanderers,
cherishing in their breast a sacred
secret which was divinely withheld
from the curious eye of the uninter-
ested. Gaining admittance to this lowly
place, the mother and her babe, they
settled down for the night. Soon
the dark shadows overhung the quiet
town which bore no likeness to itself
during the midday scene. All was
hushed in slumber. One place was
not considered more than another, but
as to all that passed in the seclusion
of that stable, the most obscure and
least thought of of all resting
places, the gospel narrative is silent.
So much had been divulged to us, that
the mother and her virgin mother
"brought forth her first born son,
and wrapped him in swaddling
clothes and laid him in a manger." Surely the glory of the
event which shone around the shep-
herds as they watched their flock
shown around this manger. What
must have been the feelings of the
young mother and the peasant of
Galilee as they gazed with loving eyes
upon the rightful Lord of the universe,
the coming of whom it had long been
their duty to know by a holy divination;
but let us leave them with their sacred
gift and step out into the stillness to
see if there are any aware that He lies
in that manger.
But lo! the streets are peopled, and
the stillness of the night is made vocal
with heavenly music. What does this
mean? Jesus the Son of God has
come to earth? Yes, it is true, you
know and we watch their flock
shown around this manger. What
must have been the feelings of the

